THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. April 16, 1937 Iyar 5, 5697 No. 5.

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(Concluded)

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EDITORIALS

Hebrew Week

THE Histadrut Ivrit has proclaimed the week of April 11-18 Hebrew Week, to call attention to the role of Hebrew in the rebirth of the Jewish people, and to the new and vast and important Hebrew literature being created, not only in Palestine, but in America and in other diaspora lands as well. Incidental to this purpose is the desire to raise enough funds to carry on the manifold activities of the Histadrut: the publication of the *Hadoar,* the only Hebrew weekly in America, the publication of works in Hebrew by American authors, the conduct of Hebrew forums and lectures, and the guidance and aid of the Histadrut Ha-Noar Ha-Ivri, the youth organization of the Histadrut, which has its own publication, its own Hebrew theatre, its own Choral Society, and its own network of clubs, forums and lectures.

The budget that the Histadrut has set itself is but $15,000; yet it is incredible, but unfortunately true, that it has a difficult time collecting even this paltry sum. When one thinks of the many millions of dollars raised and spent by American Jewry for relief and reconstruction of Jewries abroad, for Centers and Y's and synagogues, for defense of Jewish rights here and elsewhere, for innumerable charities, it seems unbelievable that American Jewry gives so little to the support of Hebrew and Hebrew literature.

Hebrew Week should serve as an excellent occasion on which we can rededicate ourselves to a few simple propositions regarding the role of Hebrew in our Jewish civilization. Hebrew is the open sesame to Jewish life. It is the key with which we can open the vast storehouses of the Jewish literature of the past and present. It is the soul of the Jewish national revival. Without it, Zionism and the Palestine experiment are unthinkable. Without it there is very little left of Jewish creativity in modern times.

If we take our Zionism seriously, if we believe at all in the rebirth of the Jewish people, and in the possibilities of a new and creative Jewish culture in our day, the Hebraization of our life and thought and speech is imperative. Jews may survive without Hebrew, but Jewish culture without Hebrew will be inarticulate.

The very least we can do is to support the few brave souls, who, despite all obstacles and in the face of a hostile environment, carry on year after year, creating the little literature we have in this country, encouraging the few writers we have, spreading the knowledge of Hebrew through the press, forums and schools. Hebrew writers in this country write without hope of compensation; but they

should be able at least to have their writings see the light of day. Yet so indifferent are we to the fate of our Hebrew writers that we do not have adequate funds with which to make possible the publication of their works, let alone the support of a real Hebrew monthly periodical.

But we should not stop there. We should promote the study of Hebrew and Hebrew literature, and make it possible for more and more children, adolescents and adults to get a thorough Hebrew education, which would enable them to participate fully in the new Hebrew civilization being created in Palestine and in other countries.

If there were enough adults studying Hebrew, it might be possible to publish a new type of magazine in Hebrew, a magazine with vowels, with many pictures, and written in a simple Hebrew style. That many adults have in the last few years seriously undertaken the study of Hebrew is an encouraging sign. The success of the Women's Classes conducted by the Israel Friedlaender Classes in New York should stimulate new efforts in the direction of adult study of Hebrew.

And while we are learning Hebrew, we should make possible at the same time the translation of the best that is being created in Hebrew into English, so that American Jews who are not acquainted with modern Hebrew literature will at least get to know its content, if not its soul. Where is the enterprising body which will undertake to subsidize a series of such translations?

The Public School and The Religious School

EDUCATIONAL circles in New York City have been much agitated in recent months because of certain proposals by religious agencies which would bring the religious school closer to the public school. One of these proposals, made by public school teachers belonging to the Catholic and Protestant Teachers Associations and backed by their respective organized religious bodies, would permit pupils to be released from public school during regular sessions, at the request of their parents, for one hour a week to receive religious instruction at a nearby religious school. In addition, two bills have been introduced in Albany. One would permit principals to record the religious affiliation of pupils and make these lists available to religious school authorities in the neighborhood, and the other would, by constitutional amendment, permit denominational teachers, provided and paid for by their respective organizations, to give religious instruction in public school buildings to children of their own faiths. There is also a bill before the State legislature, which is sponsored by Catholic bodies, and which has been turned down in previous years, asking for State support of parochial schools. Recently, these bodies have succeeded in obtaining free bus service for parochial schools in the same manner as it is supplied to public schools.

Opposition to these various proposals has been voiced by the United Parents Association and the Public Education Association. Especially noteworthy to us is the resolution made public by the officers of the Jewish Teachers Association, which has a membership of about twenty-five hundred public school teachers. Though they profess appreciation "of the importance of religious education in the life of the individual as well as in the life of the community," they are determined "to oppose any program whether by legislation or otherwise that seeks to use the time or the premises of the public schools during school time, as a means for initiating or promoting sectarian religious instruction." This attitude, held consistently by this Association, has led to the inaction and probable dissolution of the Interfaith Committee which had been organized for cooperative effort among public school teachers and representatives of religious agencies on behalf of a wider

program of religious education in New York City.

This attitude of the Jewish Teachers Association, which has been supported by the representatives of the local Rabbinical Council in the Interfaith Committee, and which, no doubt, would be endorsed by Jews generally, raises some very serious questions. We cannot afford to ignore the invitation of our Christian neighbors to cooperate in a program of wider religious education. While we must guard against sectarian religious influences and controls in our public schools, we must nevertheless accept our responsibility for a cooperative program outside the public school with a view to developing mutual respect among the various religious groups. A sincere regard for religious differences should make for more fair play and greater tolerance. We should recognize the fact that the education of the child should be integrated. It should be participated in by home, the public school, the religious school, and the social environment. The work, influences, and responsibilities of the religious school should be taken into account by the public school authorities insofar as they are interested in the total development of the growing child.

Religious school authorities have realized the inadequacy of the Sunday school, and are laying greater emphasis on the supplementary religious weekday school. Though the public school schedule has always threatened the existence of the religious weekday school of the Jews, their respect for the public school has been so great that they have refrained from urging a reduction in its schedule. Christians, however, who favor the supplementary weekday school have effected a one-hour-a-week reduction in certain parts of this country. If the Jewish religious school is to benefit from the reduction of public school time, it must obtain at least *one-hour-a-day,* that is, the schools would have to close at two o'clock instead of at three. This would constitute a recognition of the usefulness of the religious school which the public school authorities could well afford. The readiness of Jews to cooperate in such a plan has been attested to by the rabbinical members in the Interfaith Committee when they offered to accept the "reduced time" plan instead of the "released time" plan. Outside of its interference with public schedule and procedure, the latter plan would be difficult to carry out, even for the religious school, because of administrative as well as curricular inadequacies.

There is still another plan which permits of cooperation for Jew and Christian alike, although it affects the high school pupil only, namely: a limited number of elective Regents credits toward a high school diploma for certain standard requirements fulfilled in the study of Jewish or Church history or religious literature. This plan would relieve the heavy school schedule of the pupil, leave him some time for attendance at a qualified religious school of his own choice, and offer due recognition to the values of such schooling. This is a practice followed in some states, and might well lend itself to experimentation in New York State.

Most Jews are not anti-religious. They spend annually more than the members of any other single denomination in New York City on the religious education of the young. They want more time for this education, and would welcome any opportunity to cooperate with their Christian neighbors and with public school authorities to obtain a better division of the child's school day in order to afford him more adequate religious education. They cannot, however, accept any plan which would lead to more Christianization of the public schools, and the penalizing of Jewish children and teachers for observance of Jewish holidays. They would join every effort toward better mutual understanding, toward greater appreciation of religious differences, toward a more integrated and wholesome educational process, and toward higher social and spiritual values.

Why Should Sabbath Observance Be Penalized?

IT will doubtless come as a shock to the readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST to realize that in the State of New York which contains a Jewish population of two millions it is impossible for a Jewish merchant to keep his place of business shut on the Sabbath, without being penalized economically. In other words, a Jewish businessman who wishes to observe the traditional Sabbath by refraining from business must also observe Sunday as well. Under a system of government in which Church and State are distinct, this represents political and economic penalization of Jewish observance. Obviously, the law which compels Sunday closing, without regard to the observance of any other day, is unfair.

For some time an effort has been made to correct the situation. Under the auspices of the Jewish Sabbath Alliance of America there has been introduced at almost every session of the New York State Legislature, for the past fifteen years, a bill which would allow a businessman to keep his place of business open on Sunday, provided he observed some other day of rest. Such a bill is now pending before the New York State Legislature. It is Assembly Bill No. 1410, introduced by Assemblyman Charles H. Breitbart of Brooklyn. During its long and variegated history this bill has some times been buried in committee. On one occasion it passed the Assembly. And yet despite the relief which it would bring to observing Jews and despite the patent fairness of its provisions, it is still not the law. THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST appeals to its readers to impress upon their representatives that it is high time for the discrimination against Jews to be ended. They should communicate either with the Jewish Sabbath Alliance, 302 East 14th Street, New York City, or with Hon. Charles H. Breitbart, Hon. Oswald D. Heck, Hon. Irving M. Ives, Hon. Irwin Steingut, Hon. Harry D. Suitor, or the Senator and Assemblyman of their districts, in the Assembly Chambers, Albany.

A number of interesting inferences can be drawn from the fact that after fifteen years this bill is still not law. In the first place, in that fact there is an indictment against those national Jewish organizations which pretend to be devoted to the defense of Jewish rights. These organizations have, to be sure, given their support to this proposal. But they have been so busy, as a rule, defending Jewish rights against encroachment, that they have found neither the time nor the energy to devote their full force to positive measures which would protect inner Jewish life.

The second implication is even more disturbing. Two million Jews in the Empire State cannot apparently have their Sacred Day protected. Once again, Jewish disorganization is revealed for what it is—the avenue to impotence. If Jewish communities were properly organized, if they could honestly claim to speak for integrated Jewry, the Legislature would not so long have denied them their legitimate request. The Catholic Church can by its unified influence defeat a socially progressive measure such as the Child Labor Amendment. Jewry cannot insure the right to an unpenalized observance of its Sabbath—a proposition that is both morally and socially beyond reproach. The lesson is clear. We shall not have our most justifiable demands fulfilled, until we are so organized as to ask for them in unity.

"Cracking Down On the Unaffiliated"

WHAT should be the attitude of a rabbi when his services are requested by Jews who have no affiliations with the synagogue? What shall the attitude of the congregation be when its rabbi is asked to give of his time and energies at the behest of non-members? This question has been agitating synagogue groups for a long time. Recently, a Federation of Congregations was organized in Chicago

for the purpose of instituting some kind of discipline in the realm of religious rites. One of the rules adopted is that no non-member can procure the services of a rabbi unless his petition is passed upon by a central committee. If the committee is convinced that the individual cannot afford to belong to a congregation, he may be assigned to one or another rabbi for the satisfaction of his immediate need.

The plan sounds to us rather inadequate. Let us envisage the scene: the applicant appears before the committee to ask for the services of a rabbi, because he wants to have his daughter's wedding ceremony performed. The committee tries to persuade him to join a congregation. Which congregation will the committee recommend? If the members of the committee represent the various congregations, they will undoubtedly try to "pull in" the customer for themselves. It is no secret that congregations are in serious competition, and a new member is a new member for a' that. If, on the other hand, the petitioner claims that he cannot afford to belong to a congregation, what then? The committee assigns a rabbi to him, and after the wedding, the situation is back where it started: the congregation has not grown and the individual is thrown back into the masses of unaffiliated.

The original impulse behind the organization of the Chicago Federation of Congregations is undoubtedly a good one, namely, to bring some kind of order into the chaos of Jewish religious life. We cannot, however, be very sanguine about any solution that does not go to the roots of the problem. So long as Jewish life is organized on a congregational basis, large masses of Jews will continue to remain unaffiliated, for two reasons: first, they cannot afford to belong to synagogues and temples, second, they are not prepared to enter Jewish life through a particular type of worship. Worship is the culmination of their Jewish affiliation; religion is the climax. They must come with the desire merely to be Jews; they will "remain to pray." The vast numbers of unaffiliated, therefore, must be initiated into Jewish life through a broader and more comprehensive organization, namely, the Community.

Now envisage the situation: a member of the Jewish community desires the services of a rabbi; he does not belong to any congregation. As a member of the community, he is entitled to a rabbi's services, for the community would have engaged a staff of rabbis and functionaries for just that purpose. There is no longer any need for the Jew to appear before a committee and explain why he is not a member of a congregation. If, on the other hand, he is not even a member of the community, then he has no right to the services of any rabbi, and no rabbi has the right to serve him. He has cut himself off from Jewish life as a whole and officiating at any function for him would be a mockery. "Cracking Down On the Unaffiliated" (as the New Orleans Jewish Ledger calls the Chicago plan), under present conditions, is impractical and somewhat unfair; in an organized community, it would work, and it would be just.

Religious Civilization: The Universal Aspect of Judaism

By NATHAN A. BARACK*

ONLY those who believe that there exists an absolute truth in the realm of human values may justifiably speak of universal concepts and creeds. Not without reason do fundamentalists, claiming unconditional validity for their criteria of truth and falsehood, eagerly look forward to the millennium when their dogmas will gain universal acceptance. Those, however, who contend that philosophies and

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social systems are valid only insofar as they are conducive to the self-exression of the individual adhering to them, can with little consistency believe in the existence of systems universal *in toto*. For that would signify that mankind is composed of individuals identically constituted, living in a homogeneous environment, and sharing in common social heritages and historic experiences.

The absurdity of such an assertion is obvious. The social relativist recognizes man's dynamic and flexible nature. Human reaction under dissimilar conditions varies not only physically but also emotionally and ideologically. The "absolutely" true beliefs of a happy person frequently become "absolutely" false in his unhappiness. Seeking self-realization (salvation) an individual accepts (or attempts to create) the conditions (or the world) which will answer his needs. Briefly, the student of social science is inclined to regard the belief in the probability and desirability of applying a definite set of dogmas universally as a result of extreme naiveté and a failure to appreciate the complexity of our present world. At best, it manifests a total disregard of the existence of other human beings and their needs.

It is only in elemental human requirements and tendencies, and their general realization through social trends and outlooks that we discover a wide range of applicability, transcending group and national limits. For the human being is so constituted as to render certain necessities indispensable to his survival. He acquires new forms of expression with his social progress, and deeper self-realization with personal advancement. At the lower rung of human development we find the necessity for food, sex, and elementary social intercourse. As we ascend the ladder of civilization we discover organized social life and various form of scientific and esthetic expression.

Expression can be said to consist of essence and medium. In its lower stages the media are simple and relatively universal; in its higher forms they are more variegated and narrower in range. Thus, music is found everywhere among human beings, savage and civilized. It differs, however, in specific media of expression from group to group—depending on differences in geographic conditions, national traditions, etc.—and in degree from one person to another. It would be preposterous to speak of one absolutely true (or great) symphony, one that all people should find equally enjoyable and enriching. It is not a particular symphony but the cultivation of music appreciation, through media most adapted to the individual, that we regard as essential.

I

Unhampered self-expression, the ultimate prerequisite to happiness, has been and is man's aim in life. Philosophies and social systems are merely means to that end. Very often, due to chaotic conditions, force of habit, mass inertia, or social ignorance, the real goal is obscured by the means. Nevertheless, even when the means is clung to as an obsolute and universal end in itself, it is also only a medium to self-expression. Fundamentalists, who bow unconditionally to creed and authority, submit to a particular faith, because they have been educated to find *satisfaction* in it. It is *their* creed to which they ascribe universal authority.

Civilization is consequently a system of media for the self-expression of its members. In this respect all civilizations are alike. Language, mores, and institutions, in harmony with a given stage in human development are all indispensable for human fulfillment. The particular language or the distinct institution has value not because of its *distinction,* but chiefly insofar as some medium is required through which the elemental human needs can express themselves. A person has a beautiful home. Its loss would cause him much unhappiness, because it has become "part of himself." He could, however, conceivably have become habituated in like manner to another beautiful home; and would have been, perhaps, grieved to the same extent upon separation from it.

Love of beauty—that is an essential trait; attachment to a beautiful home—that is one of the possible media; the particular home is only the accidental medium. On the other hand, should that person never have possessed a beautiful home, and its absence consequently never have been felt by him, he would not have realized himself fully. Potential self-expression would have existed; the medium for its actualization, however, would have been lacking.

Once a medium through which an essential form finds expression is firmly established, it becomes extremely difficult to separate the two without an accompanying disorganization and discord, and consequent misery and unhappiness to the individual. An Englishman coming to reside in France would find it difficult to accustom himself to French life, because the essential forms of expression common to both civilizations have for him already assumed definite outlet through channels provided by the English civilization; so that essence and specific medium have become to him indistinguishable. His child, on the other hand, not having become habituated to English media, would find adequate expression in the French civilization.

Given the hypothetical case of two civilizations with conditions approximately equal in their favorability to like forms of expression, but differing in specific media, it would be absurd to speak of the superiority of one to the other. Should one of the civilizations, however, be *deficient in a form of expression* or in the conditions requisite for its maximum realization, that civilization would then fail to serve the potential needs of its members. We could then speak of that civilization as "inferior," because it would not provide its members with full means for self-realization. There are indeed civilizations that possess essential traits not characteristic of others. Thus, the scientific and artistic phases of the Greek civilization were not shared by others in its day. A Greek who migrated to another country not only changed specific media, but actually deprived his child of an essential form of expression. With the progress of mankind it became unnecessary for one, in order to enjoy this aspect of Greek civilization, to become a Greek, that is, to settle in Greece and become assimilated. For the love for science and arts was absorbed into other civilizations, which created their own media.

II

Judaism also, as a civilization, possesses a certain aspect that has universal significance. That aspect is its religion. The positive and religious nature of the Jewish civilization is the product of a unique national experience, and ancestral traditions. The Bible, with its recurrent refrain of Jewish transgressions, punishments, prophetic exhortations, repentance, and promise of ultimate deliverance is the record of a people that hit upon a new mode of living. They hit upon this blindly and were unable to grasp the meaning of their discovery until the deeper insight of their great men led to the final comprehension by the people. The great leaders in Israel did not create their own ideologies. They merely articulated what had struggled for expression.

Judaism was evolved through the struggle of a people for survival and ascendancy. Christianity, on the other hand, was evolved through the effort to escape that struggle. Born in adverse times, it was led, as a result of overwhelmingly unhappy experience, to a negative attitude toward life, and to the emphasis on spiritual values. This served to preserve its devotees, at the time of its birth, from despair and complete destruction. Inevitably, however, as soon as the critical days during which Christianity first saw light were past, it was driven to a hypocritical dualism. Thus, whereas originally it emphasized the Kingdom of God, asceticism, and the doctrine of "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's," it later retained these teachings only in theory, while in practice the church proper became Caesarean. Since early Chris-

tianity sought spiritual heights by negating the material aspect of life, and since man can normally deny life only for a brief period, theoretical Christianity was from the beginning doomed to failure. Unlike Christianity, Judaism taught high moral values *as expressed by positive life.* The triumph of a just society would be more of a victory for positive Judaism than for negative Christianity.

Marxism theoretically emphasizes the material phase of life. This outlook is more realistic than that of Christianity, for material existence is more elemental than the spiritual; but, nevertheless, by itself it is inadequate for full human expression. Man's everlasting goal is happiness. That aim must not be confused with its means. Material satisfaction is only a partial means for self-expression, which can be achieved only by living a life wherein the moral and the material are merged and harmonized. Such life can be actualized only in a religious civilization.

Modern religions fail because they are divorced from the life of modern civilization. Modern religions are outmoded not because of creed, but because their leaders, with the honorable exception of a few, fail to recognize fully the interaction between the spiritual and the material. The highly complex nature of the modern social mechanism renders the Judaic, sociological synthesis of life not only most desirable but urgent. There was never, potentially, a greater opportunity for its effective application. Formerly, before the advent of the modern economy of abundance, when a competitive society with its highly tempting and oftentimes inevitable stimulants to irreligious life, was economically necessary, it was well-nigh impossible for the religious civilization to be fully actualized. A vicious circle, from which we have not as yet extricated ourselves, unavoidably existed then. Economic necessities arising out of the economy of scarcity, were not conducive to a religious life; and the resulting materialism, in its turn, tended to perpetuate the prevailing conditions even long after the exigencies giving rise to them were past. The triumph of science was a God-send not only for the material, but, potentially, also for the moral aspect of life. All the forces that unite in molding man can now be harmonized in a religious civilization with modern media.

Will a religious civilization be of equal benefit to all? Unfortunately, no. Environment cannot modify radically the organic nature of an individual plant or animal during its relatively brief existence. However, only the proper atmosphere possesses the factors for actualizing the potentialities of an organism. A sterile plant will not bloom even in fertile soil; but neither will a rich seed flourish in a barren field. Men's spiritual characteristics, in a certain respect, function organically. Not all people are constitutionally capable of lofty religious heights, either emotionally or intellectually. There are those who possess an innate predilection for a high religiosity. These must live, daily and extensively, a life tending to the realization of their potentialities. Yet even those less privileged are equally in need of a religious civilization for the development of their inferior religious qualities. The non-musically inclined can partially cultivate music appreciation and to that extent enrich his life. Likewise with religion. Religion, however, being less individualistic than pure art, more comprehensive in scope, social in bearing, and ultimately basic to any life above routine existence, must necessarily not be severed from the important forms of life. This can be achieved only in a religious civilization.

III

For such a world, those should strive who desire conditions under which man will be able to find his fullest expression. Meanwhile, dark reaction is sweeping the world, with the likelihood that its destructive onrush will not be impeded but will rather gain momentum, and thus prolong indefinitely the life of our socially unscientific world. It is therefore doubly urgent that Jewish leaders follow the Recon-

structionists in their endeavor to readapt our own religious civilization to present-day needs. It will be necessary for the Jew, in order to find fullest self-expression, to be a member of two civilizations, with his own religious civilization occupying a secondary role.

We must realize at the outset, however, that this combination has, unfortunately, disadvantages in more than one way. Conventions and mores which may have had at one time some understandable basis, rightly or wrongly, but which are now considered non-understandable and innocuous are found in all civilizations. Habit, routine, or a reverence for the old, causes their retention long after the original causes for their birth are past. Should a civilization, however, come in contact with another with which it is in some degree in conflict, or should a crucial point in the history of a civilization be reached, then the non-understandable folkways lose their routine base, becoming a matter for conscious analysis, and will either be dropped or rationalized. The latter method has had and will continue to have an injurious effect on the development of him who employs it, for it habituates him to rationalize in important matters also.

Moreover, one who has already become accustomed to the media of a certain period in man's history finds it difficult to substitute others in their stead. The close relationship between essence and medium causes the two to be almost indistinguishable, and creates in the normal human being a deep-rooted attachment to his accustomed mode of living. In a primary civilization changes in media are usually gradual. Even when their manifestation is violent in form, they are also a result of a long process. In a secondary civilization media may, because of external forces, suddenly, before they can be replaced normally by others, become inadequate. Early reform leaders confronted with what appeared to them outworn media were unable to substitute others in their place. They were, therefore, led to regard Judaism not as a religious civilization, but as a religion in the liberal Protestant sense. They failed to see that a civilization, even if it is socially and intellectually backward, has intrinsically far more elements of survival than the sublimest beliefs not concretely embodied. Members of a secondary civilization, we see, may at times be compelled to choose between its temporary unsatisfactory media and its complete disintegration.

Finally, life in two civilizations, a primary and a secondary, means for the average person, because of time expended in preparation for and in earning a livelihood, simply a duplication of certain forms of expression, such as language, in their elementary and not in their higher cultural levels. This implies an expenditure of time and energy which could have been utilized more beneficially in achieving higher self-expression in the primary civilization. For the more gifted individuals this double life signifies the loss of leisure indispensable to physical relaxation. Surely, complete self-fulfillment in one civilization is preferable to partial in two.

These are some of the difficulties that must be candidly borne in mind in our attempt to reorient Jewish life. Being aware of them at the commencement of our task, we may at least succeed in mitigating them. When we have organized American Jewry communally on an extensive and intensive basis where possible, so that reaction, hypocrisy, and indifference in our ranks will have been minimized, we shall discover that the benefits of our imperfect religious civilization, in the present chaotic and grossly materialistic world, will greatly counterbalance the sacrifices of those participating in it. And it will have well deserved the arduous efforts of those who will have reconstructed it.

A Confession*

(Concluded)

By Jessie Sampter

THIS half century which I have lived has changed human affairs so rapidly, has made so much history, that I am its faithful child in having also in my life traversed ages of experience. This, the half century of electricity, ushered out Queen Victoria, free competition, positivism and the horse-and-buggy, and ushered in the telephone, telegraph, cable, X-ray, automobile, airplane, cinema, radio, television, Russian Communism and Italian Fascism. I was born into a German-Jewish, third generation American upper middle class, well-to-do, completely assimilated, highly cultured bourgeois and individualistic family in New York City, where *trefe* meat was eaten as often as three times a day, where Christmas trees and Easter eggs obliterated all traces of *Hanukkah* and *Passover,* whose prophet was not Moses but Darwin. My maternal grandfather ate on *Yom Kippur* and my paternal grandmother made fun of people who kept *kosher.* I am now a citizen of Palestine, a vegetarian. I am a member of a Socialist-Zionist commune of agricultural and industrial but highly cultured workers, the chief aim of whose rapidly growing and penurious settlement is to bring as many Jews as possible, as quickly as possible, to our ancient home land. Having crossed continents, literally and figuratively, from one civilization to another, I know into the depths of my being what civilization means and what it does not mean. I know what are the eternally human and what are the transiently provincial things, what is international and what is national, what in me is human and what in me is Jewish.

In a godless household of Ethical Culturists, I got God from the servants by the time I was seven. I knew him quite intimately and prayed to him nightly to beg him to make a good girl of me. I also got from these same servant girls an ineradicable sense of human equality. But if they, or anyone, ever told me I was Jewish, it made no impression. When I was seven years old, some children in the street told me I was Jewish, which impressed me exactly as if they had told me I was a rag-picker, a gypsy or an idiot. I denied it hotly. I went home to be enlightened, to pass through the fire of indignation into a defender of my race, but to continue to hang up my Christmas stocking and to paint my Easter eggs.

When I was fifteen, having already tasted tragedy and swallowed it down, the childish religion with which I tried to sugar-coat bitter reality split and broke under the pressure of maturing thought. I became an atheist, who had loved God and had lost him. Life was an empty and horrible void. I sought a way out. I sought above all to understand first the pain and grief of life, second, the absence of God who was supposed to have made this now meaningless and fatherless world. The world and I—we were both orphans; yet we were. It became necessary to explain not only death and pain but life and joy, thought, beauty and love. I remember, as a turning point, one night on the seashore realizing first the vast sea, then the stars—each star a sun larger than our sun, this earth a grain of dust and I, dust of dust—and suddenly realizing who was thinking this thought. It was I. This infinity which terrified me lived in my own mind. And terror became awe. I remember a woman's red hat flash among green trees in a park near Paris, and the instantaneous realization that beauty justifies life. My mind that day was a raw sore, and the flash of color was a balm, as of a loving healer's hand. To me that

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which replaced God, the God recreated in turmoil out of the night of emptiness, the realization of Being as in the beginning out of the chaos of my own heart, could never become that symbol of fatherhood, of clanhood, of nationality and later of humanity to which the peoples prayed and pray. Such a God has his place in history; he is responsible for and created by civilizations and changes with them. He is a symbol like a flag, a concrete something which smaller minds need, in order to realize the unseen whole, a handle for the emotion to grasp and hold fast. His "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," his morality, is the morality of the people or peoples he represents. My God refound was not a moral God, though morality be a necessary part of that universe—or of that part of that universe called humanity—whose very existence proclaims him. My God was an inner experience, a Presence felt and understood but not to be expressed in prose, an overwhelming realization to be expressed incompletely but passionately in poetry, music, art and in the way of life itself. Half my life ago in crisis, terror, sacrifice and resurrection, I found the answer to the questions I had asked after my childish world crashed, and though the name may not have been well chosen, I then called the answer God.

Today I do not care to use that name.

My God was neither Jewish nor Christian. He needed no congregation. Yet I found him reflected in humanity, in great art and literature, and therefore also in parts of both sections of the Bible. But my solitary heart needed a congregation. Personal life had failed me, left me empty yet over-rich with spent and unspent love. So I went to seek for a congregation and I found a Unitarian Church. The words of the minister and the psalms he said tallied with the words in which I might and did express what I felt. But the ways of this congregation did not tally with what I needed. This congregation was not mine. Their societies were polished surfaces. Their charity was not love. All their ways were comfortable, self-satisfied and superior. This people was not my people. Then, one Sunday, when I had almost left them, I heard read from this pulpit parts of a modern Jewish book. Suddenly, as I had seen myself in the stars, I saw myself in the Jewish people. This was my congregation, this scattered, persecuted, poverty-stricken and divided people. My people, my congregation. At that moment I passed over from one kind of life into another. My God had spoken.

My first step, then, into my heritage was not Zionism nor Judaism; it was the acceptance of the Jewish people as my congregation. Through what I knew of the Bible—and I then knew the Bible well in English—and through this one modern poem which I had heard, the "Book of Pain Struggle," by Hyman Segal, and no doubt at all also through something in my direct spiritual inheritance, I experienced the Jewish people as my people and as historically and inevitably engaged in seeking to understand and to do what life has predestined within man and what, for want of a clearer expression, I now called the will of God. At first I rejected Zionism. What could geography have to do with an inner struggle? Very soon, however, I saw the connection, the need for earth under our feet and the meaning of history to a people. Before this, being absorbed in biology, psychology and philosophy, history had meant nothing to me. I had been a theoretical, a "parlor Socialist," I could not find contact with the materialism of the Socialist party. Now I found my Socialism in Zionism which meant to me the resettlement of Palestine by the Jew—whose Prophets were to my mind the first Socialists—in the spirit of social and economic equality. I found that spirit among the Zionists of New York's East Side.

From the acceptance of Zionism, I passed quickly to my own interpretation of Judaism. In this I had three teachers, three who stand out from many. Henrietta Szold, in whose household I saw the grace and beauty of traditional forms and who

initiated me into an understanding of the synagogue service which made it possible for me to find truth, goodness and beauty, that is, poetry, in the set prayers, and to penetrate the depths of feeling among a mixed and distracting group of worshipers; Dr. Mordecai Kaplan, who opened my eyes to the true place of the Bible in Jewish life, not as history, not as miracle, not as religion, but as the history of the unfoldment of the Jewish spirit. My third teacher was the Jewish people itself, as I found it on the East Side of New York City, where I went to live in order to be among my own. I learned Hebrew, and as I learned I had the distinct feeling that I was remembering something known long since and long forgotten. I entered into rich treasures of thought, old and new; and as I came to know my people better, I saw that those who had preserved these treasures and those who were creating new values for Jewish life in America and Palestine were embodying the traditional Jewish customs and ceremonies in their daily lives. I saw these customs ridiculed or neglected by those who were carried along by other customs just as rigid but different, unintegrated and mechanical. *Hanukkah* replacing Christmas, Passover Easter, and Saturday the Sunday Sabbath, gave meaning and distinction to the fact of my Jewishness. The sufferings of the Jews were as my sufferings, their weakness as mine, their power and overcomings and their future were mine. In the space of a few years I lived through intensively what I had missed for generations. In synagogue service, in diligent study and in traditional living among the poor of my people, I recapitulated my lost history.

Then I came to Palestine.

A few weeks before my departure, Dr. Kaplan invited me to a meeting of persons interested in the reconstruction of Judaism. There I sat next to a prominent rabbi. During a pause in the discussion, I whispered to him: "I believe only in Palestine can Judaism be recreated. Only there will it have the freedom from pressure to grow naturally."

He answered, "We must make the effort here; there life will do it."

"Life will do it there." I considered, I am going there now. What is life there, if not I and others like me?

I have now been seventeen years in Palestine. Life has not yet done it in Palestine, neither has effort done it in America. Yet both are at work. Where life is abundant, there is no effort.

Gradually, during these seventeen years, I have dropped again those traditional values which I so avidly gathered to me when first I came into my own. I have dropped them for the same reason that I then preserved them. Seeing the rabbinate in Palestine, the arid orthodoxy that would frustrate and starve all new effort, knowing the young iconoclasts in religion, the workers, the Socialists with their warm and living Jewish heritage of knowledge and longing, I realized that those who were creating the new values of Jewish life in Palestine could not, would not and should not preserve the traditional Jewish customs as laws and ceremonies. The shell that had preserved us against decay and destruction in the winter of an alien atmosphere must be broken and cast away when the seed begins to sprout in the warmth of its own soil. I do not value any less, in its own time which it served, this burdensome shell. I do not see its use now for our life and our civilization; certainly not in Palestine and probably not anywhere. The customs without the laws and ceremonies have now in Palestine so secure a place in our hearts that we can be freed from this rigidity which had meaning when it was identified with a law-giving God and under this symbolic form saved our people, but which is today an untruth like the medieval robes and form of modern royality. It is a scab that should fall off and reveal clean new skin beneath, but which still sticks uncleanly where once it covered our wound. The God who commanded us to do what was good for the people at the time when psychological necessity set up this symbolic and imaginary authority, must now be replaced by

the people itself and by its actual changing needs.

I no longer say set prayers. I object to the form of the traditional blessings which need too much interpretation to be spontaneous expressions of our life. The house of study, the Culture House, *Bet Hatarbut,* should replace the synagogue. Formal worship, however changed or interpreted, can for us be only a lie or a self-deception. Group assembly for song, recitation and discussion, the *Oneg Shabbat,* must come to take its place. I light the Sabbath candles, but I do not pray over them. I eat *Matza* and no bread on the Passover, but I do not revolutionize my kitchen. I do not work on the Sabbath, but I light lamps and stoves, sign my name for a telegram and sew on an indispensable button. Our young pioneers are so in revolt against the laws, against the heavy hand of traditionalism they have escaped, that unless the law can be lifted from the custom, the custom also will be swept away. Yet customs are the folkways of a people; they have the same relation to action that a particular language has to speech.

Formal worship is not compatible with modern knowledge and ethics. I believe it will soon disappear from all civilizations. Why try to preserve it in ours? I agree with Dr. Kaplan that Judaism is a civilization, though I would incline to another way of expressing the same thought. Judaism is the way of life of the Jewish people. A Jewish way requires Jewish ground under our feet and Jewish enterprise. It implies a past and a future, history and prophecy, memory and direction in the eternal present. We can have all these only in Palestine. Having all these in Palestine, the Jews everywhere can listen in and dance to our tune, if they like, or reinterpret our melodies which, after all, are best and sweetest when we have reinterpreted them from theirs. Judaism, frozen so long by exile, hate and oppression, must now become completely fluid. We must not be afraid to let it set in entirely new patterns which, let us hope, will now be the banks of living streams.

Is Dr. Kaplan's idea of civilization as fluid as all that? Accepting Socialism as the only type of organization compatible with our Jewish social values, is he ready to face a new setting of the family which will inevitably follow when couples are no longer economically dependent upon each other, when the family is no longer a cooperative economic unit? With an open mind and heart we must face the many possibilities of new social settings—only one of which is in fact possible though still unknown to us—remembering that no form is in itself sacred or desirable, the only sacred and desirable aim being the welfare of human beings. That the Jewish people—as every other people—will, out of the fullness of its past, shape in the present the peculiar forms of its future, is the almost unconscious conviction which binds our days together: Hebrew language, Jewish holidays, history, literature, folkways and habits too deep and too many to be enumerated. The Jewish character, in its contradiction and synthesis, finds its ethical expression first in the need of realization, of action in accordance with faith, which in older times took the form of minute religious regulations of every day life, and which today takes the form of the return to Palestine and the living of Socialism under the exacting conditions of the *Kvutza* collective; and secondly, in the synthesis of nationalism and internationalism, in the stubborn selfhood of a people which will neither submit to assimilation nor wishes to assimilate or dominate others. This also is involved in the return to Palestine.

This intensity of realization springs from and demands constant thought. The Jews are a thinking people because they have forever to reconcile inner opposites, the desert and the garden, the nomad and the city father, God and the world. Not the idea or worship of God is unique to us. All peoples were religious, all had gods or God. Today the revelations of psychology make that type of religion as impossible as flesh sacrifices, divinations or amulets. *The time for formal worship*

has passed. It never had any but a political value, if value it was, and it is now being replaced by other political symbols, flags, conventions and parades. Such confusion of association clings to the word "God" that it would be best to leave it alone for a generation or two.

But that inner realization, the experience of eternity, the sense of eternity, which is as real and as instinctive as the sense of time (I awake in the night and know without looking that it is three o'clock; so I know also that I am eternal, that there is no change which can change this), the unique energy which is individuality and the shapes which it takes, as it were, in passing, the contradiction, the paradox which is the inexpressible reality of life and which the mind cannot grasp, which is beyond mind and yet apprehended; the sense of identity with that which is not I, so that when I look into other eyes, I am looking into a mirror and see myself; this which needs no morality yet is the source of all the good in life, must we give to that a name? A name at once misleads, crystallizes, becomes an idol; and all I have said says nothing. It is not communicable because it is before and beyond speech.

Through the confusions and limitations of speech, men have been caught in paradox and have swayed to one side or the other. They have concentrated on the inner or the outer, there have been introvert and extrovert ages, and ours is malignantly extrovert; therefore the introverts become neurotics.

But the eternally wandering, home-loving Jew is both introvert and extrovert. That is our peculiar fate, to see both sides. That accounts for Moses and for Spinoza. It presages what I have believed these many years and believe today and cannot doubt: A new light is coming into the world, as it has always come in moments of darkness and must come as inevitably as the sun rises. "Eternity's sunrise." A new *Baal Shem Tov* or another Messiah. Not the last, nor the first. A new synthesis of our hate of war and love of our land, of our social reconstruction and our individual deepening, of radios and music, machines and art, time and eternity, man and God. Our sense of wonder must be enlarged to reinclude birds as well as airplanes, the generation of a single baby as well as the generation of new nebulae. Whence will come that saving word?

A thought will burn which no philosophies, organizations or periodicals can kindle. Yet all of them plow the ground in which this seed of thought must grow. This is the burning bush. Moses, the thoughtful, turned aside to inquire into its cause. The human weapon is thought. In the end, for man, it must conquer all others. Even the most laborious and involved thought, that would preserve forms instead of taking them, plows the ground for new thought, new forms. For thought is form, which changes constantly.

Not reconstruction, but rebirth. Or are these only different words for the same prophecy?

"Not by might and not by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."